SCIENCE:

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Attention is called to the "Wants" column. All are invited to use it in soliciting information or seeking new positions. The name and address of applicants should be given in full, so that answers will go direct to them. The "Exchange" column is likewise open.

THE CHEMICAL SOCIETY'S JUBILEE [1]

AT the meeting in celebration of the jubilee of the Chemical Society, held in the theatre of the London University on Tuesday, Feb. 24, 1891, the proceedings were opened by the following address from the president, Dr. W. J. Russell: —

We meet to-day to celebrate the fifty years' existence of our society, — a time, if measured by the progress which our science has made, equal to centuries of former ages, but which in years is so brief a space that we have, I am happy to say, with us to-day some of those who were present, and who took an active part in the foundation of the society; and I need hardly say with how much interest we shall listen to their reminiscences of the time and circumstances connected with the birth of our society.

I would, by way of introduction, say a few words first with regard to our society, and afterwards with regard to the state of chemistry in England when our society was founded. We boast, and I believe rightly, that our society holds the distinguished position of being the first which was formed solely for the study of chemistry. Chemistry and physics, twin sisters, had hitherto always dwelt together; and many were the societies, both in this country and abroad, devoted to their joint study and development.

In London there was the Royal Society, which had hitherto received the most important chemical papers; there was also the Society of Arts, which is a hundred and ten years, and the British Association, which is ten years, senior of our society. In Manchester the Literary and Philosophical Society had been founded and actively at work since 1781; and we admit that our neighbors at Burlington House, the Astronomical, Antiquarian, Linnean, and Geological Societies, are all our seniors. They had a distinct individuality and literature of their own, which called them into existence some forty to eighty years before the commencement of our society. Small private chemical societies, no doubt, existed: they are the natural forerunners of a large society, and become merged into it. The Chemical Section of the British Association, which is an ephemeral and peripatetic chemical society, had existed from the founding of that body. If we turn to other countries, we find that, much as our science had been cultivated on the continent, it did not until later times engross a whole society to itself; the French Chemical Society hot having been formed until 1857, and the now great Berlin Chemical Society not until 1868. Our interest, however, at the moment is rather in the growth of chemistry in this country than in what occurred elsewhere.

To-day we may learn how it came about that the first chemical society was established in England. I may, however, state that the reason for our meeting depends on the official record that on Feb. 23, 1841, twenty-five gentlemen "interested in the prosecution of chemistry" met together at the Society of Arts to consider whether it be expedient to form a chemical society. Of the twenty-five who then met, I am happy to say three are present, — Sir W. Grove, Sir L. Playfair, and Mr. Heisch; and Mr. J. Cock is another of this band who is still alive, but is not present.

These twenty-five gentlemen appear without dissent to have come to the conclusion that it was expedient to form a chemical society, and appointed a committee of fourteen to carry this resolution into effect. So expeditious were they in their work, that in little more than a month the first general meeting was held, and the provisional committee brought forward a report embodying a plan for the constitution and government of the society; and this plan remains essentially the same, save in one point, to the present day. I refer to the formation of a museum of chemical specimens. This project was abandoned some years ago. It is worth recording that at this first general meeting Thomas Graham was elected president; Messrs. W. T. Brande, J. T. Cooper, J. F. Daniell, R. Phillips, vice-presidents; Mr. Arthur Aikin, treasurer; Messrs. Robert Warington, E. F. Teschemacher, secretaries; council, Dr. T. Clarke, Rev. J. Cumming, Dr. C. Daubeny, Messrs. T. Everitt, T. Griffiths, W. R. Grove, H. Hennell, G. Lowe, W. H. Miller, W. H. Pepys, R. Porrett, Dr. G. O. Rees; also that the society then numbered seventy-seven members. We hail Sir W. Grove as being the most active member who is still among us in founding our society, for he was a member of the first council, was present at the first meeting, and was a member of the provisional committee. I must here add to the official record, for it does not tell us how these twenty-five gentlemen "interested in the prosecution of chemistry" were collected together at one time and place. Obviously some special force was required to build up this complicated molecule. That special force was embodied in and exercised by Robert Warington. By his activity and energy he brought about this meeting; and we can imagine how difficult and troublesome a work it probably was, how some of these gentlemen had to be instigated to action, others repressed, some convinced that the aim was desirable, others that it was feasible. But whatever the difficulties were, Mr. Warington succeeded, and to him we are indebted for the formation of our society. Although he has passed away, he is ably represented here to-day by his son. The love for the Chemical Society has proved to be hereditary. Mr. Warington of to day is a most active and valued member, is one of our vice-presidents, and, as our programme shows, is about to present to us records connected with the early history of our society which are of great interest now, and will become of increasing value as time goes on.

I turn now at once from these matters immediately connected with our society to the consideration of what was being done in chemistry in this country fifty years ago. At that time public laboratories for the systematic teaching of chemistry did not exist in London. The number of real students of chemistry in this country was very small. They

[1] From Nature.